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# Occurrence of Black Snapper, *Apsilus dentatus*, in the Gulf of Mexico

David L. Trimm  
*Texas Parks and Wildlife Department*

T. Scott Searcy  
*Texas Parks and Wildlife Department*

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## Short Papers and Notes:

### OCCURRENCE OF BLACK SNAPPER, *Apsilus dentatus* IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

On July 22, 1987, an interesting lutjanid (526 mm SL, 665 mm TL, 5.0 kg) was caught by Mr. Adolph Schultz approximately 103 miles southeast of Galveston, Texas, near the West Flower Gardens Bank, in 40 meters of water (Figure 1). Personnel at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Seabrook Marine Laboratory determined the fish to be a black snapper, *Apsilus dentatus* Guichenot, 1853. Identification was based on taxonomic characters from Vergara (1978) and Anderson (1987) and by descriptions of coloration from Böhlke and Chaplin (1968). Morphological features are as follows: girth 494 mm; lateral line scales 59; gill rakers (total) 23; dorsal-fin rays X, 10; anal-fin rays III, 8; and pectoral-fin rays 15. Because we have found no published records of this species occurring in the Gulf of Mexico, the capture of this specimen is especially important.

The genus *Apsilus* is distinguished from *Lutjanus* by, among other characters, the lack of scales on both dorsal and anal fins (Vergara 1978). Although the intense violet color exhibited by live specimens of *A. dentatus* has been noted to pale to a dark brown after death, the fish caught by Mr. Schulz retained a very distinctive violet tint even after freezing.

The black snapper primarily inhabits rocky bottom environments at depths of 40 (Druzhinin 1970, Thompson and Monro 1974) to 242 meters (Robins *et al.* 1986). It is a commonly recorded member of the West Indian ichthyofauna (Bölke and Chaplin 1968). Reports of black snapper from the Florida Keys, however, are rare (Robins *et al.* 1986).

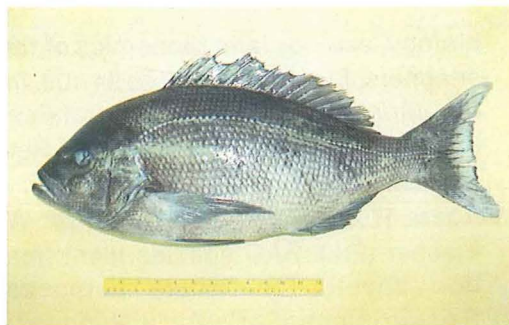


Figure 1. Black snapper *Apsilus dentatus* collected from the West Flower Gardens Bank.

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*David L. Trimm and T. Scott Searcy, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Seabrook Marine Laboratory Seabrook, Texas 77586.*